



2014 Year in Review



Ashley National Forest

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Forest Supervisor's Letter



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When I think of 2014, I think of extremes. The spring field season started with drought conditions in June that resulted in reduced livestock forage production and water availability. Then in the fall the Ashley NF received record rainfall and it looked like the drought had ended. Finally, at year's end, there was a lack of snow in the valley and in the mountains.

Similarly, oil and gas development on the Forest, started fairly strong in 2014 yet unfortunately ended with low crude oil prices world wide that affected the amount and rate of new well applications on the Forest.

Extreme conditions, whether it be precipitation that affect forage production, road conditions that affect desired access to the Forest, or lightning that affects the number of wildfires on the forest, affect the amount of goods and services anticipated by the public as well as the workloads assigned to Forest employees.

Success in the future depends, in part, on accurately forecasting changing conditions and working with the public to determine the best management options for the future. Good relations with the public and communication is the key.

It is my hope that as we look at the year 2015 and beyond, we will learn from the past and, working with each of you, plan a sustainable path of action for the future that meets the challenges ahead.

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Red Canyon Visitor's Center

The Red Canyon Visitor Center (RCVC) is going through a major remodel of all interior exhibits, interior walls and partitions and new carpet that will continue through the summer of 2014.

RCVC strives to

enhance visitor experiences as they Discover, Immerse and Explore the rich cultural and natural history of the area through displays and interpretive services offered by the Forest Service as well as our partners. Displays

and activities targeting children and adults will be offered to help instill a respect for the natural resources and geological wonders of the area.

The new exhibits will touch on various topics that include, but are not

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What Does the Forest Service Do?

Many people may be surprised by the activities taking place in the Ashley National Forest. Many are unseen by the normal visitor to the Forest yet provide data that assists scientists and others to maintain and sustain the Forest and drive future projects.

Every year the Ashley National Forest publishes a Monitoring Report that provides forest managers and the public with a brief look at the monitoring accomplished during a given year.

Program areas in the 2014 report include air quality, fisheries and wildlife, forest vegetation, heritage resources, rangeland management, recreation management and soil and water resources.

The 2014 Annual Monitoring Report can be found on the Ashley National Forest homepage at http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3822623.pdf.

AIR QUALITY



View from Lake Fork Mountain

Air Quality continues to be monitored by various indicators. A visibility camera on Lake Fork Mountain offers a qualitative view of the High Uintas Wilderness which can be observed at the following link: (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/ashley>) .

The digital images are analyzed for visibility on a quarterly basis; complete tables along with the details on the analyzing process are available at: <http://ars-fsairpgm.com/>. Once at the site click on the tab for analytical reports, then on the tab for visibility reports to view the site specifications and qualitative data.

WATER QUALITY

Water quality samples were collected from Walkup, Uinta Noname, Upper Coffin and Fish lakes in 2014. This is part of an ongoing data collection process to create a chemical analysis to determine trends in lake chemistry. The lake samples are collected in late August to mid-September.

The Ashley National Forest works with Western University to collect water quality sampling data to investigate potential air deposition (air quality) and changing temperature effects on lakes in the Uintahs. The lakes sampled in 2014



Coffin Lake

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included Walkup, Larvae Lake, Denise Lake, Taylor Lake, Hidden Lake and Jessen Lake.

Many different forms of monitoring take place across the Ashley National Forest by Forest staff and by other agencies. One example of this is the regional snowpack deposition sites that are managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Geological Survey. The sampling takes place around the end of March on the Ashley National Forest at Grizzley Ridge and Center Park in the Lake Fork Drainage. The project spans the Rocky Mountain Region from Montana to New Mexico and has been in place for 20 years. The Ashley National Forest has been participating since 2007. The project can be found at http://co.water.usgs.gov/projects/RM_snowpack/index.html.



Male Sage Grouse on an Anthro Mountain Lek.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

Fish and wildlife are also monitored on the Ashley National Forest. Surveys for the Greater Sage Grouse, and migratory birds such as the warbling vireo, red-naped sapsucker, northern goshawk, golden eagle, three-toed woodpeckers broad-tailed hummingbird, Brewer's sparrow, Cassin's finch and song sparrow to name a few.

Since 1988 the Forest has monitored the northern goshawk with the commitment of four employees from late-May to mid-August. Sixty-four of the 65 known territories were visited on the Ashley National Forest in 2014.

Winter Carnivore track surveys were conducted on the Paradise, Spirit Lake, Blind Stream, and Elkhorn Loop roads. In total, 20.5 miles were surveyed on the Vernal/Flaming Gorge District and 57 miles were surveyed on the Roosevelt-Duchesne District. Snowshoe hare, cottontail, weasel, bobcat, moose, elk, deer, and red squirrel tracks were recorded. No lynx or wolverine tracks were detected in the surveys.

Riparian protection fences located at Mann Creek (Flaming Gorge District) and South Brownie Creek (Vernal District) were checked for broken wires, loose nails or fasteners, and fallen trees across fences and repaired where needed. These riparian exclosures (designed to keep livestock out) are expected to protect the stream's water quality for at least a half mile downstream from grazing impacts on both streams.

A 50' x 5' baffled culvert was installed on Mann Creek to allow better aquatic organism passage through the pipe. The baffles will help hold substrate that naturally flows into the pipe so overtime there will be a natural stream bottom through the pipe.

Ashley NF fisheries staff assisted the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources with an intensive electro-fishing effort to remove as many non-native brook trout from these waters to aide in the restoration of

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Colorado River cutthroat trout (CRCT) (Figure 7). Brook trout were removed on seven miles of Reader Creek, and four miles on Lynn Creek and North Fork Sheep Creek, for a total of 15 miles of CRCT streams enhanced through mechanical removal of non-native brook trout.

The Middle Fork Sheep Creek from the Spirit Lake outlet downstream to the existing temporary fish barrier located just above Hickerson Park was treated with rotenone to remove the last remaining non-native fishes in preparation for restocking these waters with native Colorado River Cutthroat Trout. (This was the third and final treatment, restocking of CRCT will begin in 2015).

TIMBER and VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

In FY 2014, the Forest vegetation monitoring program continued to transition our repeat photography monitoring program to virtual reality (VR) photography (360-degree interactive imagery) that we post on a dedicated webpage: <http://anfphotomonitoring.info>. The Ashley has already posted some FY 2014 data and will post the remainder of this year's collected data over the winter. The advance to VR photography has improved the accessibility, quality, and monitoring utility of the repeat photography program.



Cart Creek Salvage 2 Overview Point Pre-Treatment Photo: July 10, 2007.

Note the large amount of standing dead.



Cart Creek Salvage 2 - Overview 3- Year Post-Treatment Photo: July 18, 2014 (Project Completed in 2011).

Note the growth of the regeneration in 7 years.

Ashley staff re-visited and re-photographed 10 existing photo monitoring points and established 19 new points in an ongoing effort to monitor the vegetation response to timber sales and timber stand treatments and to assess progress toward accomplishing vegetation treatment objectives.

The Ashley monitored timber sale contract compliance on 19 timber sales. Staff completed a minimum of weekly inspections on these sales during periods of active logging. Staff also documented contract compliance findings in 200 timber sale inspection reports.

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TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT

The Forest awarded service contracts on one pre-commercial thinning contract totaling 697 acres. Ashley staff monitored compliance on the final 60 acres of the Lodgepole Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) Project, a pre-commercial thinning contract that began in FY 2012 and was completed this year.

Reforestation surveys conducted during FY 2014 confirm 1016 acres have successfully regenerated to an appropriate stocking level. These surveys are completed to monitor the success of natural regeneration following stand disturbances such as wildfire, insect outbreaks, or harvesting. Inventories occurred in areas such as the 2007 Neola North Fire and the 2008 Mill Hollow Fire.

A forest service crew (YCC) collected a total of nine bushels of lodgepole pine cones. The cones were sent to the Lucky Peak Nursery in Boise for processing and seed extraction to grow seedlings for future planting projects. The silviculturist worked with the crew to assure the cones were collected in accordance with the R4 Seed Handbook and to monitor the quantity and quality of the seed that was collected. Sampled cones were cut and examined to determine if they contained an adequate quantity of seed.

HERITAGE RESOURCES

An active heritage resource program on the Forest monitors priority heritage assets as well as reviewing ongoing projects for compliance.

RANGE and RECREATION

Range allotments were monitored for compliance with Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) or Forest forage utilization standards. A total of 145 out of 232 pastures were monitored in 2014. Of the pastures monitored 119 (82%) met utilization standards.

In addition to the pastures that were monitored, forage utilization was assessed at 59 permanent study sites on various allotments across the Forest. Of these 59 study sites 27 met utilization standards.

In 2014 the Ute Mountain Fire Lookout repairs were completed through funding provided by the Ashley National Forest Resource Advisory Committee under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act Title II funds and the site is expected to be open to the public during the summer of 2015 for visitation.

Ranger district monitoring indicates that 90 percent of developed recreation sites are full on the peak Utah holiday weekends of July 4th and July 24th across the Ashley National Forest.

The activities highlighted in this story are a short list of the work accomplished on the Ashley National Forest. Many other projects and activities take place annually to monitor, sustain and maintain the health of the Ashley National Forest.

RECREATION PLANNING EFFORTS

Sustainable Recreation Planning effort



Navajo Cliffs Picnic Area along Sheep Creek

The Flaming Gorge Vernal Ranger District is currently evaluating 12 sites for decommissioning with a decision to make in the Fall of 2015. Sites being considered include Greendale Campground, Antelope Flat Single Site Campground, Skull Creek Campground, Red Canyon Campground, Red Springs Campground, Kaler Hollow Campground, Oaks Park Campground, old Lucerne Group Campground, Navajo Cliffs Picnic Area and Sheep Creek Bay Campground.

This effort is designed to reduce maintenance costs so other facilities can be improved. All of the sites identified have very light use. Where possible decommissioned locations will be available for dispersed camping.

Recreation Fee Increase and New Rentals Proposed

A recommendation to increase fees at one campground, one group site, three cabins and three yurts, along with new fee recreation opportunities are being proposed on three additional cabins.

“We have made improvements to many of our fee sites over the last 18 years,” said Kathy Paulin, recreation program manager for the Ashley National Forest. “Many of these improvements were possible because of fees collected at recreation sites. Increases in fees will help us continue to make improvements and provide quality recreation opportunities to visitors.”

The fee increases would be consistent with inflationary costs as well as ensure that fees are more comparable to similar public and private sites in their respective areas.

“We are proposing to have price consistency throughout the Forest at similar sites with similar amenities provid-

ed”, stated Kathy Paulin, Recreation Program Manager.

The majority (95%) of the revenue collected at recreation fee sites remains on the Forest to operate, maintain and improve the facilities and programs at the recreation sites. User-generated revenue supplements appropriated funds and helps the Ashley National Forest reinvest in recreation facilities that are important to the public.

New rental opportunities if approved would be the Moon Lake Guard Station, Rock Creek Guard Station and Yellowstone Guard Station.

Fee increases are proposed for Moon Lake Campground, Colton, Paradise and Trout Creek Guard Stations, Limber Flag, Grizzly Ridge and Carters Military Yurts.

All fee change proposals will be presented before a citizen’s advisory committee.

ASHLEY NATIONAL FOREST STATISTICS

Ashley National Forest Acres:.....1,382,347
 Acres in Utah:.....1,286,124
 Acres in Wyoming:.....96,223

Wilderness Areas Acres

High Uintas Wilderness
 Ashley N. F.....276,175
 High Uintas Wilderness
 Wasatch Cache N. F..... 180,530

Recreation

Campgrounds (Family).....60
 Campsites.....1,156
 Campgrounds (Group).....12
 Picnic Areas.....8
 Trailheads.....10
 Total Trail Miles.....1,196
 ATV (All Terrain Vehicle).....194
 Biking.....325
 Hiking.....939
 Snowmobile.....116
Total Road Miles.....1,818
ATV.....1,151

Employees

Permanent Employees.....100
 Temporary/Seasonal..... 91

Payments to Counties Amount

Uintah County.....\$13,859.72
 Duchesne County\$43,676.48
 Daggett County\$13,313.19
 Sweetwater County, WY...\$4,957.59
 Wasatch County\$61,526.06
 Utah County\$63,238.93

Land Use Permits

Non-Recreation.151
 Recreation.....122
 Power.....20
 Total Collected.....\$193,716.81

Fire Management

Fuel Treatment Acres.....7,589
 Prescribed Burn Acres.....3,558
 Number of Wildfires.....19
 Wildfire Acres Burned295

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Improved

Enhancement (Miles):

Terrestrial Acres.....6,379
 Lake Acres0
 Stream Miles.....18.9

Surveyed:

Terrestrial Acres.....,68,986
 Aquatic Acres.....1,250

Livestock Grazed

Horses26
 Cattle13,744
 Sheep5,284
 Head Months Annually53.598
 Allotments/Livestock Areas.....74

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Serving People**



Red Canyon Visitor's Center Continued

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limited to; Native American history, settler and pioneer history, geology of the area, wildlife exhibit including aquatic, reptile, avian, and mammal species, children's activity area, Forest Service history, and forest information. This project is designed to provide visitors with information about the interesting history surrounding this unique area and forest.

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